THE MINISTER OF OVERSEAS INDIAN AFFAIRS (SHRI VAYALAR RAVI): (a) The Government of Kuwait had prescribed a format for the labour contract in respect of foreign workers. Applications for work visas without the labour contract in the prescribed format were not being considered. Under the bilateral MoU signed between India and Kuwait on Labour, Employment and Manpower Development attestation of the labour contract by the Government of Kuwait and the Indian Mission in Kuwait has been made a procedural requirement in the interest of the workers. The Joint Working Group comprising senior officers from both countries constituted under the MoU, has since met and agreed on a draft model Contract which is now in use for purposes of attestation and issuance of work visas.

(b) and (c) The following steps have been taken to protect the Indian emigrant workers abroad including in Kuwait:

Government has signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the UAE and Kuwait and an Additional Protocol with Qatar, and is in an advanced stage of signing similar MoUs with Malaysia and Bahrain for the protection and welfare of Indian workers in the gulf countries and Malaysia. A national awareness campaign has been launched in the vernacular electronic and print media to educate potential emigrants about the risks of illegal migration.The Government is also considering setting up of a Welfare Fund for Overseas Indian workers and a Council for Promotion of Overseas Employment. The Emigration Act, 1983 is being suitably amended to protect the emigrant workers from unscruplous recruiting agents and intermediaries. Government has already initiated Orientation-cum-Training Scheme for skill up-gradation of potential overseas Indian workers to match the International Labour Market demand. Government has also set up an Overseas Workers Resource Centre (OWRC) including a helpline to provide all relevant information and assistance to potential migrant workers.

Indian returning from abroad

2727. SHRI B.K. HARIPRASAD: Will the Minister of OVERSEAS INDIAN AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government has assessed the extent of social and economic fall-out arising from the return of many Indians from the Gulf countries under the recently concluded amnesty scheme;

(b) whether Government of Malaysia has declared that about 2 lakh foreign workers may be sent back home by the end of 2009 of which many would be from India; and

(c) the contingency plans Government has in place to absorb such a large number of Indian workers returning from abroad?

THE MINISTER OF OVERSEAS INDIAN AFFAIRS (SHRI VAYALAR RAVI): (a) There are an estimated 4.5 million Overseas Indian workers in the gulf. Relative to this large number, there are instances of small numbers of illegal workers who are from time to time deported under amnesty schemes of the host Governments. When such amnesty schemes are announced, efforts are made by the Indian Missions concerned to regularize the stay, residence and employment of such workers. In cases where it is not possible to do so, some workers are deported though issuance of emergency certificates. The Mission renders the necessary assistance for the return of such workers. As a policy, the Government of India discourages illegal migration and has taken several steps to curb the same. These include a national

awareness campaign through electronic and print media to educate potential migrants about the risks of illegal migration. The regulatory mechanism is being made transparent to address the problem. The Ministry is also examing a proposal to establish an Overseas Workers' Welfare Fund which *inter-alia* will seek to provide on site, off site and return and resettlement services.

(b) and (c) As per the information received from HCI, Kuala Lumpur, their Minister of Home Affairs, has clarified that the Government of Malaysia has not frozen the recruitment of workers from India. He also mentioned that there is no move to limit the intake of workers from India though Malaysia was trying to reduce the number of foreign workers. Government of Malaysia would not approve work permit for any foreign worker who has worked in the country for five years or more. Further, Malaysian Government has not specified, any number that may be sent back by the end of 2009.

Amendment in Emigration Act

2728. SHRI GIREESH KUMAR SANGHI:
SHRIMATI SUPRIYA SULE:

Will the Minister of OVERSEAS INDIAN AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government is planning to amend the Emigration Act to protect the interests of 50 lakh overseas Indian workers, most of them are semi-skilled and from poor rural backgrounds, and therefore, prone to exploitation;

(b) if so, the details of the amendments that have been finalized in consultation with the missions; and

(c) whether Government has set up a Council for Promotion of Overseas Employment to function as a think-tank for conducting international labour market research and devising strategies for enabling Indian workers to avail themselves of job opportunities abroad?

THE MINISTER OF OVERSEAS INDIAN AFFAIRS (SHRI VAYALAR RAVI): (a) and (b) Yes, Sir. The amendments are in the process of being finalized.

(c) The Government proposes to set up a "Council for Promotion of Overseas Employment" as a society under the Societies Registration Act of 1860. The proposed Council will function as a strategic 'Think Tank' and respond to the changes in the international labour market on a real time basis to identify future overseas employment opportunities, the emerging labour supply gaps, country/sector specific skill requirements, make realistic projections and plans for overseas deployment of workers, disseminate relevant information to potential emigrants and implement a sustained skill upgradation programme to match the market requirement. Cabinet has approved the setting up of the Council.

Victims of human trafficking

2729. MS. SUSHILA TIRIYA: Will the Minister of OVERSEAS INDIAN AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that Indian workers in United States have become victims of human trafficking;

(b) if so, the reasons therefor; and

(c) the steps Government has taken for the safety of these workers?